

FAMILY CONNECTIONS

INTENTIONAL INTERACTIONS IN TEACHING:



Supporting Concept Development

Partnering With Families to Support Concept Development

LEARN FROM FAMILIES

Families know their child better than anyone else and have valuable information to share with you.

- Talk with parents to find out about children's interests, experiences, and preferences at home. Invite families to share with you what toys, books, and activities their children enjoy.
- Learn about families' cultural beliefs or values related to the concepts you are exploring in your class or care setting. Ask family members how you can respect cultural differences. Don't assume you know.
- Observe how the family communicates with their child about things in the environment or responds to the child during drop-off and pick-up.

SHARE WITH FAMILIES

Sharing information with families helps them become actively involved in their child's development and learning.

- Provide documentation boards with a lot of pictures and materials to show families what children are exploring and how you guide children through the investigation process. Use the documentation boards as conversation starters with family members during drop-off and pick-up times.
- Host a family fun night and provide opportunities for families and children to investigate concepts being explored in the curriculum. Take pictures and add them to the documentation board.
- Send families informational handouts that provide specific questions, language, and prompts for families to use in engaging children about the concepts being investigated. See *Family Connections: Taking It Home* (page 2) for more ideas.

COLLABORATE WITH FAMILIES

Remember, families are your partners in supporting children's development and learning.

- Ask families how they share concepts with young children or how they teach young children in their culture.
- Engage families in the learning environment by inviting them to help create a documentation board.

For more ideas and tips about extending learning experiences in the home, check out the following resources:

- First 5 California—Parent Education Site: [Brainy Insights: Important Facts about Your Child's Brain Development](http://www.cfc.ca.gov/parents/learning-center.aspx?id=9&sub=111)
<http://www.cfc.ca.gov/parents/learning-center.aspx?id=9&sub=111>
- Head Start—National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement: [Parents and Families as Teachers](http://goo.gl/bG26gY)
<http://goo.gl/bG26gY>



Supporting Concept Development

Taking It Home - Important Strategies to Support Your Child's Development

As families, you spend lots of time with your children. You can support their learning and school readiness by giving them many opportunities to explore their world and be curious about everything in their environment. Here are some ideas to get you started.

Learn how to build children's curiosity and support their exploration. Click on the link below to check out [Ten Tips to Support Children's Science Learning](http://families.naeyc.org/learning-and-development/child-development/10-tips-support-children%E2%80%99s-science-learning) on the National Association for Education of Young Children's family website.

<http://families.naeyc.org/learning-and-development/child-development/10-tips-support-children%E2%80%99s-science-learning>

Here are some ideas for you to try at home:

PROVIDE A VARIETY OF TOYS OR OBJECTS FOR YOUR CHILD TO EXPLORE

- Look around your house for toys or objects your child can use in many different ways. Items from your child's everyday environment are best. Your child might use an old mixing bowl to pretend to cook, wear as a hat, or fill up with water to water the plants.
- Provide toys or objects that differ from each other in some way. You might provide different-sized containers (for example, an empty shampoo bottle, a plastic cup, a bucket) to play with in the bathtub. Your child can explore how much water fills up containers of different size. While you're bathing your child, fill the bottles and draw your child's attention to the difference.

A variety of toys or objects give children many opportunities to investigate and understand the world around them.

ASK YOUR CHILD QUESTIONS THAT REQUIRE THEM TO USE CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS.

- Ask your child questions that invite them to wonder.
Examples: "How did you use the sponge to fill up that bucket?" "Why do you think the elephant was sad in the story?"
- Invite your child to brainstorm with you during everyday tasks.
Examples: "What gift should we give your brother for his birthday?" "What foods should we buy at the grocery store?"
- Encourage your child to solve problems.
Examples: "I see part of your block structure isn't balancing. What can we do to fix it?" "It sounds like you and your sister both want to play with the same truck. How can we decide?"

Asking children questions helps develop their critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills.

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BUILD ON YOUR CHILD'S CURIOSITY BY DISCOVERING MORE ABOUT A TOPIC OF INTEREST TOGETHER.

- Visit the library and let your child pick out multiple books about a topic of interest (e.g., airplanes, animals, insects).
- Find a local museum or park where you and your child can observe and discover new things about a topic of interest.
- Wonder out loud about something you're interested in to show your child that curiosity lasts a lifetime.

Want More? Read about specific activities and games at First 5 California's Parent Activity Center to engage your child in learning in everyday places and routines. You can visit the First 5 California Parent Activity Center at <http://www.first5california.com/parents/activity-center.aspx>. Additional activities are on Head Start's family website at <http://goo.gl/OXO4Mp>.